



BASIC EDUCATION, GED INSTRUCTION, AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Rhode Island's Department of Human Services (DHS) offers many opportunities for Family Independence Program (FIP) parents whose lack of an education may be a barrier to finding and retaining employment.

The need for basic education including literacy or remediation, and/or obtaining a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) is identified after the academic testing of FIP adults. FIP social case-workers refer FIP students to educational services provided by contracted agencies. These include Dorcas Place, the Rhode Island Department of Education, and the REACH Program at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI).

Another contract provider, the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, refers FIP adults who are identified through testing to the appropriate educational services.

Educational services are also offered through the DHS Individual Education and Training Certificate Program. Vendors participating in this partnership include:

- Chamber Education Foundation
- Youthbuild
- Travelers Aid
- Family OutReach (FOCUS)
- Dorcas Place

DHS contracts with CCRI's Reach Program to provide comprehensive services to FIP students who wish to enroll in post-secondary education at any of their three campuses or four satellite locations statewide. Over 65 associate degree and certificate programs are available to FIP students.

Through CCRI's REACH Program, students receive support services including career counseling and guidance in education activities. REACH staff will also assist with employment placement and job retention. For 2002, CCRI had:

- 396 post-secondary enrollees
- 41 associate degrees awarded
- 18 secured employment with average entry wage of \$ 8.19

LEARNING DISABILITIES PROJECT

The Rhode Island Learning Disabilities Project is a unique initiative that was developed by the DHS Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) and the Family Independence Program (FIP). Through this collaborative effort DHS staff identifies FIP parents with learning disabilities and provides them with the necessary accommodations and voca-

tional training they need to become independent and self-sufficient.

The process involves: screening by FIP workers, a referral to ORS, testing and clinical evaluation, an individualized plan for employment, job development services, and job retention services.

Learning Disabilities Project

FIP Adults Referred	151
FIP Adults Interviewed	101
FIP Adults Tested And Eligible	74
Employment Plans Developed	73
Obtained Employment	33
Employment Retention	30
FIP Adults Enrolled In 2002	168

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Certification as "Bridges to Practice Trainers" through participation in the Seattle Academy sponsored through NIFL.
- Presented at the "New England Partnership for Adults with Disabilities and NIFL" in Maine, April 2002.
- Sponsored the first Rhode Island Learning Disabilities Conference, CCRI, May 2002.



SERVICES FOR PARENTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Rhode Island's Department of Human Services (DHS) offers many opportunities to Family Independence Program (FIP) parents whose limited English proficiency may be a barrier to finding and retaining employment.

When a parent is identified by his/her FIP social caseworker as having limited English proficiency, the parent can select from a variety of programs offered through DHS contracted services.

Services include:

- Academic assessment/testing
- Classroom instruction
- Vocational assessment and career awareness
- Computer literacy
- Work-readiness skills
- Short-term skills training
- Work experience placement
- Employment placement and retention

PROJECT OPPORTUNITY

DHS contracts with the Rhode Island Department of Education's Project Opportunity to improve English proficiency. Services are provided at the following agencies:

Genesis Center, Dorcas Place, Progreso Latino, Goodwill Industries, Blackstone Valley Community Action Program, RI Regional Adult Learning Project (RIRAL), ChildSpan, and ESL classes at DHS's Providence Office.

OUTCOMES

In 2002, Project Opportunity provided services to approximately 250 FIP parents.

Student success is measured by the individual's advancement to a vocational education program or employment placement.

- 243 parents improved English proficiency
- 69 parents advanced to further vocational education
- 43 parents became employed, average entry wage of \$9.50

SER JOBS FOR PROGRESS

The Department of Human Services has an agreement with the Department of Labor & Training and SER (Service, Employment, Retention) Jobs for Progress to provide a Rapid Job Entry Program for non-English and limited English speaking FIP families. Services include:

- Education and employment history assessment
- Career overview
- Interviewing skills
- Workplace competencies
- Job search skills

OUTCOMES

- 141 FIP parents became employed
- Average wage at hire was \$6.96
- Average hours worked per week (at hire) for all families is 35
- SER Jobs for Progress offers employment services in the following languages: Spanish, Portuguese, Creole, Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong.

SER Jobs Statistics for 2002

ONE PARENT FAMILIES

# employed	106
Wage at hire	\$6.96

TWO PARENT FAMILIES

# employed	35
Wage at hire	\$6.96



JOB TRAINING AND PLACEMENT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Department of Human Services (DHS) Family Independence Program (FIP) can help families obtain the skills needed to find a job, get a promotion, or find a better job.

In 1998, DHS started the Job Training and Placement Certification Program to facilitate access to job training and placement for FIP parents. The pre-certification process provides DHS and its FIP parents with a list of pre-qualified vendors with a demonstrated track record of successful training and placement into unsubsidized jobs. The primary goal is to prepare and place FIP parents in full-time employment. Vocational trainings include but are not limited to: Certified Nursing Assistant, Bank Teller, Teacher Assistant, and Computer Technology. The organizations that have been pre-certified as vendors include:

- Children's Friend & Service
- Computer-ED Business Institute
- Community College of RI

- Genesis Center
- Goodwill Industries of RI
- MTTI
- New England Gerontology Academy
- People In Partnerships Inc.
- Rhode Island Central Directory for Nurses Inc
- Rhode Island College Outreach
- Rhode Island College School of Social Work
- RI Community Food Bank
- Salve Regina Project Empower
- Training & Learning Channels
- Travelers Aid
- Urban League of RI
- Youth Build
- International Institute (added in 2003)
- Ser Jobs for Progress (added in 2003)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The first certifications for the Job Training and Placement Program were given in September 1998.

For the year 2002, 725 FIP parents were referred and approved by their FIP social caseworkers to attend training. The average wage for those who entered employment in 2002 was \$9.41 an hour. Many parents experienced wage increases over time.

All vendors are held to performance-based standards and outcomes. Evaluation criteria include:

- Program completion rates
- Percentage of parents who get work
- Starting wages
- Retention rates

Average Wage at Job Entry	
VENDORS	WAGE
RIC Project TRAMA	\$11.56
RIC Case Management	\$12.18
Computer Ed	\$11.54
Travelers Aid	\$10.90
NEGA	\$10.75
Salve Regina	\$10.08

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- All vendors listed above were re-certified in July 2002
- Vendors are paid at performance-based benchmarks e.g. 90 days job retention
- 25% holdback of final payment until FIP parent is employed for 90 days
- All data verified by DHS MIS
- Wages ranged from \$6.15 to \$19.00 an hour at entry into employment



JOB SEARCH, PLACEMENT AND RETENTION FOR FIP PARENTS

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) offers special incentives for Family Independence Program (FIP) parents who are ready to work. FIP offers the following to families who are employed:

- Earned income disregards that supplement wages with cash benefits
- Child care subsidies
- Health insurance
- Employment retention services
- Stopping of the FIP time clock for FIP adults who work 30 hours or more per week

In addition, DHS contracts with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT) to provide a Rapid Job Entry Program called the "Job Club." This two-week "Job Club" provides FIP adults with job-readiness services, including:

- Education and employment history assessment
- Career overview
- Resume preparation
- Interviewing skills
- Workplace competencies
- Job search skills

"WORK PAYS" COUNSELING

The Department of Human Services' Rlte Works staff provide "Work Pays" counseling to individuals and groups of beneficiaries transitioning into the workforce. Topics included in the counseling are:

- Becoming a taxpayer
- Earned Income Tax Credits (state and federal)
- FIP income disregards and supplemental grants
- Transitional Rlte Care medical coverage
- Child care subsidies

After completion of the "Job Club," FIP adults meet daily with employment counselors to explore job opportunities, arrange interviews, and report on interview experiences. Job seekers have access to NetWorkRI and DLT offices statewide. After employment, DLT counselors continue to maintain contact for six months in order to address barriers and problems as they occur.

DHS also contracts with DLT to provide employment services to non-custodial parents who are referred to DLT directly by the Family Court. DLT provides services including:

- Job-readiness assessment
- Education/skills assessment
- Interview preparation
- Actual employment opportunities
- Job retention

The goal of "Work Pays" counseling is to empower the FIP beneficiary to be self-supporting by providing him/her with the knowledge and resources available to Rhode Island working families.

2002 Facts & Figures

"Job Club" Enrollees	433
Employment Placements	223
Placement Rate	52%
Average Wage	\$9.57
Non-Custodial Parents Referred	55
Non- Custodial Parents Employed	22
Non-Custodial Parents Average Wage	\$10.40

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

In addition to "Job Club" services through the Department of Labor & Training, other contract providers offer employment placement assistance:

- Project REACH at CCRI has placed 118 FIP adults with an average wage of \$8.19
- Department of Education's Project Opportunity has placed 43 FIP parents with an average wage of \$9.50



YOUTH SUCCESS: SERVICES FOR ADOLESCENTS AT RISK

*Y*outh Success," building on strengths, not deficits, increases the likelihood that teens graduate from secondary school well prepared to lead productive, self-supported lives. A considerable number of program participants achieve their goals after three to five years in the programs.

Rhode Island's Adolescent Self-Sufficiency Collaborative (ASSC) and Youth Responsibility (YR), embody the spirit of "Youth Success." Teens under the age of twenty (20) participate in three core curriculums to gain knowledge and skills and to practice behaviors that:

- Reduce birthrates for unwed teens
- Improve social skills/character development
- Improve academic and relevant life skills

ADOLESCENT SELF-SUFFICIENCY COLLABORATIVE

All pregnant and parenting teens in RI without a high school diploma may receive ASSC services. ASSC services include: assessing each teen's

needs; assuring that they enroll and maintain attendance in an educational setting; providing opportunities for career exploration, service learning, parental/mentor involvement; and providing advice on paternity and child support. When minor pregnant and parenting FIP teens cannot remain with their own parents, ASSC will identify, locate and maintain appropriate adult supervised living arrangements.

YOUTH RESPONSIBILITY

Boys and girls age 13 to 18 who are at high risk of school drop out, too early pregnancy/parenting and welfare dependency are eligible to participate in Youth Responsibility (Previously the Male Responsibility Project). Most participants are in school; some are not, but many enroll in Youth Success Career Academies or other GED classes. In addition to the three core curriculums, all boys and girls have opportunities for career exploration, service learning, supervised recreation and parental/mentor involvement.

CORE CURRICULUMS

Both the Adolescent Self-Sufficiency Collaborative and Youth Responsibility utilize proven effective lessons from the following curriculums:

- "Reducing the Risk" and "Becoming a Responsible Teen" are used to reduce primary and secondary/repeat pregnancy.
- "What Do You Stand For? A Kid's Guide to Building Character" provides lessons on social skills development.
- Daniel Memorial Institute's "Independent Living Skills" are used to teach about: money management, food management, health, housekeeping, transportation, educational planning, job seeking skills, emergency and safety skills, legal skills and housing.

2002 Facts & Figures	
Adolescent Self-Sufficiency Collaborative participants served	1411
High School/GED Graduation rate	67%
Repeat Pregnancy	6%
Minors given Adult Supervised Living Assistance	11%
Youth Responsibility participants (boys) served	243
School Drop-outs	0%
Too-Early Fatherhood	0%

- Youth Success programs serve all youth at high risk of: school drop-out, too-early parenthood, criminal behavior, substance abuse, and welfare dependency, not just those young people receiving Family Independence Program cash benefits.
- 82% of Youth Success participants live in the six core cities (Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, Woonsocket, Newport, and West Warwick)



NEW OPPORTUNITY HOMES

New Opportunity Homes (NOH) are adult supervised licensed residences for pregnant minors and/or minor female parents and their children who meet one of the exceptions to the “live-at-home” rule of TANF/FIP. NOH were created for minor teens who need an adult supervised home when they can no longer remain with their parents. NOH residents may stay until they are 18 1/2 years old. Then assistance is given to the new mother to transition to an independent living situation.

NOH residential sites in Cranston, Providence, Newport, Johnston and Pawtucket are provided by community based organizations under contract to DHS. Currently, DHS contracts for accommodations for 14 minor teen parents and their children.

Eligibility for residency is determined by a multi-disciplinary team consisting of representatives from the Department of Human Services, the Department of Children, Youth and Families, New Opportunity Homes, and the Adolescent Self-

Sufficiency Collaborative (ASSC). Residency in NOH is voluntary. Parents retain all of their rights and responsibilities during their child’s residency.

The level of need for supervised living is based on each applicant’s age and stage of development. Pregnant or parenting minors will be placed in the appropriate level of supervision. These are:

- Level I - 24 hours/day supervision
- Level II - 16 hours/day supervision
- Level III - 8 hours/day supervision

New Opportunity Homes connect each resident with her own ASSC case manager. NOH cooperates with the ASSC in meeting its goals to reduce birthrates for unwed teens, improve social skills and improve academics as well as other relevant life skills. They provide a gender-specific environment within each site which comprehensively addresses the special needs of girls and fosters gender identity and healthy development.

DESIGNED WITH GIRLS IN MIND

New Opportunity Homes provide:

- Space that is physically and emotionally safe that provides girls opportunities to address their needs
- Opportunities to learn about and develop healthy relationships (both within and outside the residence) to model positive behavior
- Opportunities to process family dynamics, trauma, and victimization
- Opportunities for empowerment and self-growth

NOH Capacity			
Cranston	Comprehensive CAP	Level 1	4 beds
Providence	Urban League of RI	Level 2	4 beds
Newport	Child & Family Services	Level 2	2 beds
Johnston	Tri-Town CAP	Level 3	2 beds
Pawtucket	Blackstone Valley CAP	Level 3	2 beds
Total			14 beds

NOH UPDATE

- A greater need for 24 hrs/day supervision will lead to the expansion in FY03 of the Providence site to include two Level 1 beds increasing NOH capacity to 16 .
- Of the 29 girls who lived in a New Opportunity Home this year, 8 graduated to independent living by age 18 1/2.



FAMILY VIOLENCE OPTION ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Nationally 60% of women receiving welfare have been victims of domestic violence as adults compared to 22% of women in the general population.

In 1997, Rhode Island adopted the Family Violence Option which allows the Department of Human Services (DHS) to screen, identify and refer people who are or might be at risk for domestic violence to get the necessary services they need. This commitment ensures the safety of battered women and children. DHS has funded the Family Violence Option Advocacy Program through the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Women's Center of Rhode Island. DHS has worked with the Domestic Violence advocates to develop policies to provide help and resources to domestic violence victims.

If an individual discloses abuse at a welfare office, an immediate referral is made to one of two Family Violence Advocates who conduct a comprehensive domestic violence assessment to

determine if the safety of the individual would be enhanced by granting a waiver from child support cooperation or work requirements. DHS makes the final determination on whether a waiver should be granted for up to a six month period. A reassessment is conducted by the Family Violence Advocate at the end of this period to determine if a waiver is still needed.

In-depth services such as safety planning, crisis counseling, bilingual services, court advocacy, and referrals for other resources including emergency shelter, support groups, and mental health services are also provided by the Family Violence Advocate.

Family Independence Program (FIP) staff continue to provide information on the Family Violence Option to all FIP applicants and recipients.

Rhode Island's Family Violence Option Advocacy Program has received both national recognition and positive evaluation results.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Taylor Institute's report, *Keeping Battered Women Safe Through the Welfare-to-Work Journey: How Are We Doing?* identifies Rhode Island as a model in the forms it developed, its involvement of domestic violence advocates and the development of the newsletter *Connections*.

A Spring 2000 MCH Evaluation report found that the program was reaching the clients most in need of services; that DHS has been successful at informing

clients about advocacy services; and that the majority of clients found the DHS worker or the advocate helpful or very helpful in getting them services.

DHS continues its successful collaboration with the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence and its commitment to helping victims of domestic violence.

Statistics on the Family Violence Option

Since August of 1998	Number
Total Clients Served	882
New Domestic Violence Waiver Assessments	478
Domestic Violence Waiver Re-assessments	80

- In 2002, the average number of active FIP cases receiving domestic violence waivers in a quarter is 23 for work waivers, 168 for child support waivers, and 8 receiving both work and child support waivers.
- Total average domestic violence waivers in 2002 is 199 per quarter.
- Family Violence Option Notices are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Laotian and Cambodian.



TRANSPORTATION FOR FIP RECIPIENTS

Nationally only 6% of welfare recipients own a car. In Rhode Island, 24 % of the Department of Human Services (DHS) Family Independence Program (FIP) recipients own a car. The remaining 76 % must rely on fixed route public transportation, which does not exist in some areas and is unavailable at certain times in other areas. This lack of transportation is a significant barrier to employment.

DHS is collaborating with the Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA) to provide Access to Jobs Flex transportation to work for Family Independence Program (FIP) recipients for whom transportation would otherwise be a barrier.

Two vans have been successfully operating in Woonsocket and the West Warwick/Coventry area. Children accompanied by a parent can be taken to child care on the way to the parent's employment site, thereby eliminating another frequent barrier to employment.

This Access to Jobs Flex Service Transportation Program is a reservation-based curb-to-curb, geographically limited public transportation service

designed to serve areas where the bus routes are not accessible. Passengers are connected to fixed routes whenever possible. This pilot is funded by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration's Job Access and Reverse Commute Program along with matching DHS TANF funds.

In October 2001, in another collaboration between the DHS Office of Rehabilitation Services, RIPTA and the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, the Work Link Program began providing Flex Service transportation to work for people with disabilities in the Portsmouth/Tiverton area. FIP recipients may also access this service to get to their jobs.

The Family Independence Program (FIP) reimburses \$3 a day to FIP beneficiaries for transportation to education and training.

DHS also purchases RIPTA bus passes for Rlte Care enrollees (some are FIP recipients) who are without transportation. These bus passes, which can be obtained at supermarkets, can be used for transportation to work, school, or medical appointments.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

DHS and RIPTA were awarded the 2001 Welfare to Work Transportation Award from the American Public Transportation Association for their collaboration in the development of the Access to Jobs Flex Transportation Program.

Rhode Island's Access to Jobs Flex Program and Work Link Program were highlighted in the October 2002 Issue of the Welfare Information Network as examples of integral work support resources.

Rhode Island's Access to Jobs Flex Program and the Work Link Program are recognized by Easter Seal Project Action in *Building Mobility Partnerships for People with Disabilities* in their June 2002 Report, *Opportunities for Federal Funding and Promising Practices*.

Access to Jobs Flex Transportation

Average Trips Per Day	FY 2003
Woonsocket	69
West Warwick	29
Tiverton	6

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- With prior approval by a Rlte Care health plan, paratransit or taxi services can be used by Rlte Care recipients, including FIP recipients, who do not live on a bus line and need transportation for necessary medical care.